A HISTORY OF JAPANESE LITERATURE

The Years of Isolation

HUICHI KATO
anslated by Don Sanderson

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Volume 2
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FOREWORD by RENÉ E. ETIEMBLE

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To Midori and Paul
and
in memory of David

Foreword

My meetings with the author would alone have amply sufficed to make me aware of the close affinity which exists between us in so many respects. When the first volume of this *History* appeared it only confirmed my affectionate admiration for its author. Then came *Six Lives, Six Deaths* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1979), published under the joint names of Robert Jay Lifton, Shuichi Kato and Michael R. Reich. The last portrait, that of Mishima Yukio, 'The Man who Loved Death', is analysed by Shuichi in terms so close to my own diagnosis that our explanations can be superimposed on one another like two equal isosceles triangles.

I find, therefore, that despite my lack of detailed knowledge, the value-judgements which I have formed in half a century of reading Japanese literature, from the *Kojiki* to the novels of Kawabata, have been both reinforced and greatly enhanced through reading Shuichi Kato. For example, I can now better understand why, of all the writers of *haiku* that I first got to know, it was Kikaku who was the most accessible and the most familiar to me. It is because he talks about down to earth subjects like courtesans, *sake* and brothels; in short about the real life which Rimbaud pretended not to exist, and about its oppressive features, which, aided by Hitler and Stalin, affects all of us, indeed sometimes overwhelms us from all sides.

Again, and this confirms a long discussion we had one night in Hiroshima on whether or not alliteration has a role to play in *haiku* – the author shows, on pages 100–1, when dealing with Bashō, that those who maintain that alliteration is of negligible importance as an element in the prosody of this particular verse form are probably wrong. But if Shuichi Kato is not one of these narrow-minded historians of literature who turn their backs on formal analyses, one should not think of him, for that reason, as

lacking in flesh and blood or as uninterested in social questions, or ideologies, dominant or otherwise. If he finds in Bashō an exponent of what French critics have called 'art for art's sake' it is because he does not hesitate to put him into his proper context in relation to the social and religious environment of his time: 'For this poet, uncommitted to the values of the *samurai* or the *chōnin*, and unconcerned with the other-worldly doctrines of Buddhism, the "Way of Elegance" came inevitably to be the only value in which he believed and by which he lived. There were few if any examples of such a thorough commitment in the secularized culture of the seventeenth century.'

Here, then, is something to compensate us for all the nonsense which we accumulate in this Europe of ours, in its frantic search for *yin* and *yang*, for *zen* on the cheap, as though it were so much hashish or heroin; here we can find solace in the *haiku* of Bashō, and I for one, can better understand why this poet has become such a favourite of mine. Here, there will be surprise and disappointment for some when they learn that the victory of Nobunaga was the result of the equal contempt felt on the one hand for Shinto, the religion of the Yamato, and on the other hand, for the intruding creed which had come from India, through its Chinese version of *tch'an* (the future Zen). It was with merciless logic that Japanese pragmatism examined all things temporal or spiritual.

Indeed, how can anyone reading this second volume fail to agree with the author's conclusions on page 112: 'Hakuseki and Saikaku, although one used the vocabulary of Sung Confucianism and the other that of *chōnin* and *haikai*, were alike in trying to grasp the reality of their respective worlds and were thus both excellent observers. Both stood out from their contemporaries. Sorai and Chikamatsu, being poets, were masters of language. Hakuseki and Saikaku produced their incomparable prose not primarily from a concern with language but from a concern with reality.'

We who fall indiscriminately for everything which comes from Japan – cars, motorcycles, cameras – could say, like my wife, Jeannine Kohn-Etiemble, who includes in her general literature course quite a few Japanese works, 'Honda for everyone, but Bashō for no one'. She means that those of us who approach Bashō, approach him head down and eyes tight shut,

understanding nothing, just as, for example, the Japanese reacted to Neo-Confucianism, and to the contributions of the Dutch. As for the Dutch, it was simple; one learnt their language to be able to borrow their knowledge of anatomy, their dissection technique and their fire-arms technology.

Yes, now at last I begin to understand why I am writing an Introduction for my dear friend Shuichi Kato: it is because he deals with his Japanese literature in the way in which, in my view, all literature should be handled: without isolating it from the economic and sociological conditions in which it arose, but at the same time not treating it simply as a mirror reflecting these conditions.

Every great work of literature has its birth pangs in that crucial moment of exquisite pain in which the social environment becomes refracted – rather than reflected – in a lucid and sorrowful conscience under which an *id* is aspiring to become an *ego*: *wo es war, soll ich werden*. Should I say that this is a secular view of literature? Why not?

René E. Etiemble

Glossary of Terms

See also the glossaries in Volumes 1 and 3.

Ainu Previously known as Ezo. The indigenous people of Japan. In Tokugawa times they were confined to the north of Honshū and Hokkaidō.

Amaterasu (ōmikami) The Sun Goddess of Japanese mythology. Associated with the Imperial family and Ise Shrine.

Analects of Confucius A record of the sayings of the Chinese philosopher Kong Qiu (known as Master Kong or Kong-zi, 551–479 B.C.) prepared by his disciples. The primary text of the Confucian school which came to dominate Chinese philosophy.

Ashigaru Originally common infantry. In the Tokugawa period the lowest rank of *samurai*.

Benkei See *Yoshitsune*.

Bugei The martial arts.

Bunjin The literati, a style consciously adopted by a type of Japanese artist who sought inspiration from the Chinese literati school. Where the Chinese had been for the most part retired or disgraced officials living a life of cultured leisure, the Japanese literati had to adapt this style to the economic realities of their less-exalted station.

Bunraku A later term for *ningyō jōruri*; taken from the Bunrakuza theatre in Ōsaka (now the Asahi-za).

Bushidō 'The Way of the Warrior'. The code of behaviour for members of the warrior caste. Necessary virtues include fidelity, self-sacrifice, loyalty, modesty, propriety, fastidiousness, frugality, economy, martial spirit, honour and love.

Chajin A 'tea-person', someone devoted to the cult and ceremony of tea.

Cheng brothers Cheng I (1033–1108) and Cheng Hao (1032–85), Neo-Confucianist philosophers and initiators of, respective-

ly, the school which was completed by Zhu Xi and the school which was completed by Wang Yangming. The former, roughly speaking, held that the universe was not legislated by the mind, the latter that it was.

Chōnin 'Burghers'. The mercantile, urban classes, lowest in the official Tokugawa hierarchy.

Dutch studies and Dutch scholars During the Tokugawa period the only foreigners with whom the Japanese came into contact were the Dutch traders at Nagasaki. This meant that the language used as a medium for anyone interested in studying European culture was Dutch, and the study itself became known as 'Dutch studies'.

Giri 'Duty'; what is owing to society as a whole.

Haikai Short poem in the syllable pattern 5–7–5. Later known as *haiku*.

Handayū bushi A style of *jōruri*, originating with the performer Handayū in Edo. Popular from the 1680s to the 1770s.

Jōruri Dramatic chanted ballad, the substance of which is often simultaneously acted out by puppets (*ningyō jōruri*).

Junshi The act of committing suicide on the death of one's lord as an act of loyalty.

Kakekotoba A play on the different meanings of a word used to link two successive phrases so that the meaning of the word in the second phrase is different from its meaning in the first. It is possible to demonstrate in English – 'I sit beneath the pine for my love'– but seldom possible to translate.

Kami A 'god'; any thing, animal or person of transcendent quality.

Kanazōshi Short stories written in simple, classically influenced Japanese, popular in the late seventeenth century.

Kirishitan 'Christian' (from the Portuguese *Cristão*), a general term for the converts of the missionaries who came with and after Francisco Xavier in the middle to late sixteenth century.

Kōdō 'The Way of Incense'. An elegant avocation in which the adept tries to appreciate and identify various kinds of incense. There are games which can be played combining one's skill at *kōdō* with knowledge of other arts.

Kojiki Japan's oldest extant history. Completed early in the eighth century. Centred on the mythological and legendary

history of the Imperial house.

Kokoro The essence or core of any phenomenon. In people the mind/heart/spirit.

Koku A unit used to measure rice, approximately 180 litres. *Samurai* were paid in rice measured in *koku;* the wealth and power of *daimyō* were in turn signified by the amount of rice the central government decided it was possible to grow on their land.

Koto A stringed instrument, played by plucking. A 'Japanese zithern'.

Kouta Popular songs adopted and sophisticated by the more cultured classes.

Kuruwa The licensed quarters. The authorities sought to regularize prostitution by confining it to distinct areas, surrounded by a wall. These areas came to be a kind of separate world within which the restraints of the ordered existence were relaxed, although in practice prostitution often flourished outside them as well.

Kyōka A comic *tanka.*

Machi-shū The term used for *chōnin* in the Kyōto-Ōsaka area in the early part of the Tokugawa period and before.

Manyōshū Japan's first poetry collection. Completed in the mid-eighth century.

Mencius Meng-zi (371?–289? B.C.), whose teaching systematized and developed the work of Confucius.

Michiyuki Literally, 'a journey'. A scene of travel in either *Nō* or *jōruri.* In *jōruri* the journey is typically the flight of lovers to their glorious death, and the textual and theatrical style at this point is suitably poetical and charged with emotion.

Nanga 'Southern paintings', a style of monochrome ink painting originating with the 'southern' Chan (Zen) Sect in China. Subtle, evocative and fluid in line, this was the style favoured by the *bunjin* (literati) painters of Japan.

Nihonshoki A Japanese history produced in the early eighth century.

Ningyō jōruri Puppet play accompanied by the chanting of *jōruri* (q.v.).

Ninjō 'Human feelings', especially those of a personal and private nature.

Ninjōbon 'Books of human feelings'. Sentimental romantic

novels popular in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Ōbaku-shū A sect of Zen which entered Japan during the isolationist policies of the *Bakufu* and was consciously Chinese in style.

Okagemairi Sudden enthusiastic mass pilgrimages to the Grand Shrine of Ise (in present-day Mie Prefecture). When the urge to join in hit them, no obligations, whether to other family members or to social superiors, kept the pilgrims at home, and often they took up and left without making any preparations for their journey.

Pure Land Sect (*Jōdo-shū*) A sect of Buddhism founded in the late twelfth century by Hōnen. The central tenet is the need for complete faith in Amida Buddha and future salvation in the Pure Land. Thus self-improvement is unnecessary, a feature which contributed to the sect's wide popularity.

Renga Linked verse. Several poets would attempt to 'cap' each other's verses. The thematic links between successive verses were extremely subtle.

Rōnin A masterless *samurai*. As the *samurai* was devoted to service, to be masterless was a contradiction.

Sabi A mood or quality of elegant simplicity, especially associated with the poetry of Matsuo Bashō and his school.

Sakoku 'Closed country'. The isolationist policy adopted by the Tokugawa regime.

Sarugaku A comic entertainment, featuring mimicry and vocal comedy, popular in the Heian period.

Satori 'Realization, awakening'. One aim of Buddhism, especially associated with Zen: to perceive things as they really are.

Senryū A short comic verse.

Seppuku Suicide by disembowelment, considered an honourable end for a warrior.

Sewamono A domestic piece, that is, a kind of puppet play or *Kabuki* which deals with the life of 'ordinary people' as opposed to the fantastic figures and actions of the historical plays.

Shinjū Love suicide, the suicide of a pair of lovers whose love is impossible in their society and who choose death as an apotheosis of passion. Most sublimely represented in the work of Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1724).

Shuinsen 'Red-seal ships'. Vessels granted a license to trade with foreign countries during the period when Japan was being unified and before the exclusionist policies of the Tokugawa government.

Six Classics The *Book of Changes* (I Jing), the *Book of Odes* (Shi Jing), the *Book of History* (Shu Jing), the *Book of Rites* (Li Jing), the *Book of Music* (Yue Jing) and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun Qiu). The earliest works of Chinese philosophy and the foundation of the Confucianist school and other of the literati schools of philosophy.

Soga brothers Historically these two brothers avenged their father's death in 1193; on the stage and later in fiction they became types representing filial piety and heroism. The theme of their revenge, as well as the characters themselves, were woven into other plots, often anachronistic, usually highly implausible.

Suiboku-ga Chinese-style ink and brush paintings, especially those of the Muromachi period.

Sushi Pieces of fish, often raw, served on vinegared rice-balls.

Tanka A verse form with the syllable pattern 5–7–5–7–7.

Terakoya The temple schools which gave a basic education to the less-privileged classes who could afford it throughout the Tokugawa period.

True Pure Land Sect (Jōdo shin-shū) A sect which was developed out of the Pure Land Sect in the thirteenth century by Shinran.

Ukiyo-e 'Pictures of the floating world', woodblock prints of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often depicting famous courtesans, actors, landscapes or scenes from life.

Uta See *Waka*.

Wabi A mood or quality of tranquillity, especially of a rustic nature. Associated with the tea ceremony and *haikai*.

Waka A generic term for Japanese verse, later used exclusively to mean *tanka*.

Way of the Former Kings The notion, found in Confucius, that there had in the past existed perfect rulers, especially, for Confucius, the Duke of Zhou. Later the Japanese philosopher Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728) used this notion as a norm against which to judge the development of Confucianist thought.

Yamato The old name for Japan, especially before the influence of Chinese culture.

Yamato-e A specifically Japanese style of painting, largely free of Chinese influence, using purely Japanese subject matter derived from Japanese poetry and tales.

Yinyang The two cosmic principles or forces of Chinese philosophy. *Yin* represents such qualities as femininity, passivity, cold, darkness, wetness, softness. *Yang* represents masculinity, activity, heat, brightness, dryness, hardness. *Yin* and *yang* are complementary and through their interaction are produced all the phenomena of the universe.

Yomihon 'Reading books'. A genre of fiction popular in the first half of the nineteenth century, mostly consisting of historical romances influenced by Chinese colloquial fiction.

Yoshitsune Minamotono Yoshitsune, historical figure and legendary hero. Born shortly before the defeat of his clan, the Genji, Yoshitsune was (in later popular legend at least) slight of build, elegant, magically proficient in combat and doomed to eventual defeat, all factors that have contributed to his popularity. He defeated Benkei, the massive and warlike priest, in a duel on a Kyōto bridge, and thus gained a devoted lieutenant.

Yoshiwara The licensed quarters of Edo and the centre of the culture which was not officially sanctioned, this being a considerable proportion of the literature and art of the time.

Zazen 'Sitting Zen'. Zen meditation.

Translator's Note

The obvious limitations and inherent compromises that inevitably obtain when rendering in another language a large number of originals from different authors and periods is to state the obvious. Sorai's Chinese, for example, is more precise and succinct than an English translation will show; whereas Norinaga's Japanese is more rambling than English can express without being comical. In a longer translation of any one writer's work there is the opportunity for the spirit of the author to be revealed. Here, we must accept what Katō says about each writer without being able, within the pages of this volume, to experience their style. Any inadequacies of translation, therefore, will, I hope, provoke the reader to seek more complete versions of the work, or, ideally, the original itself. And then it is well worth returning to Katō's account of literature: it is more illuminating the more there is to be illuminated.

The wide range which this history covers means more than difficulties in translation. It extends far beyond what an Anglophone reader would expect from the word 'literature' (although not beyond the definition of the Japanese *bungaku*). This redefinition is stimulating. We are forced to challenge the comfortable conventions of what is and is not literature and admit that there are many ways for a person to record his or her thoughts and feelings, all of which can be interesting and tell us something of the person and the age.

If there is any justification for translation it lies here – in the unsettling of settled definitions. This ability to disturb also has something to do with Katō's style. He is known in Japan as a 'western-oriented' writer and his knowledge of western culture is indeed formidable. As one might expect, one finds in his style

a relatively high proportion of 'western' terms and concepts. These are, however, never used to display irrelevant erudition or bolster up a sagging argument. He uses them with a precision and economy which is all the more remarkable when one remembers that the subject of this volume is the Japan before the incursion of the West, an area in which western approaches can only be used with the greatest tact. One is struck again and again by a use of Japanese which is not 'western' but rather the most incisive expression which he could find, whatever the source; the aim is not to impress or overawe the reader but to communicate with him or her with the greatest clarity. Again much is lost in translation; but not, I hope, all.

My profound gratitude is due to Masako Saitō who helped me with this translation with immense kindness, patience and erudition; and to Irene for her help and much else.

Don Sanderson

Note on Orthography and Titles

Developments in Asian studies since the publication of Volume 1 have led to two orthographic changes being introduced into this and the following volume of the *History* . The letter 'm' representing the *n* sound before the consonants 'b', 'm' and 'p' in romanized Japanese words has been replaced by the letter 'n'. Chinese proper names and book titles are now given in *pinyin*, the romanization system officially adopted by the Chinese government in 1979. A third major change is the use here of English titles to refer to most works in Japanese. Japanese titles are, however, given in romanized form at the first citation of each work in the text and are retained subsequently for older works discussed at length in Volume 1 and where translation is unnecessary or problematic.

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